

Colleton County DSS Child Welfare Services Review March 2005

During the week of March 14-18, 2005 a team of DSS staff from state office and surrounding counties conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Colleton County. A sample of open and closed foster care and treatment cases were reviewed. Also reviewed were screened-out intakes, foster home licensing records, and unfounded investigations. Stakeholders interviewed for this review included foster parents, Colleton DSS supervisors, and representatives from the schools, Foster Care Review Board, Mental Health, Guardian Ad Litem.

Period included in Case Record Review: September 1, 2004 to February 28, 2005
Period included in Outcome Measures: Mar 1, 2004 to Feb 28, 2005

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county to:

- a) Determine to what degree services are delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and agency policy; and
- b) Assess the outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

State law (sec 43-1-115) states, in part:

The state department shall conduct, at least once every five years, a substantive quality review of the child protective services and foster care programs in each county and each adoption office in the State. The county's performance must be assessed with reference to specific outcome measures published in advance by the department.

The information obtained by the child welfare services review process will:

- a) Give county staff feedback on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- b) Direct state office technical assistance staff to assist county staff with their areas needing improvement.
- c) Inform agency administrators of which systemic factors impair county staff's ability to achieve specific outcomes.
- d) Direct training staff to provide training for county staff specific to their needs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The county-specific review of child welfare services is both quantitative and qualitative.

The review is **quantitative** because it begins with an analysis of every child welfare outcome report for that county for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the county in all areas of the child welfare program: Child Protective Services (CPS) Intake, CPS Investigations, CPS In-Home Treatment, Foster Care, Managed Treatment Services (MTS), and Adoptions.

The review is **qualitative** because it assesses the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services. The review seeks to explain why a county's performance data looks the way it does.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section One

Safety Outcome 1: Children are first and foremost protected from abuse and neglect.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding: Partially Achieved

-Safety Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations. **Finding: Area Needing Improvement**
-Safety Item 2: Repeat maltreatment. **Finding: Strength**

Analysis of Safety Item 1 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.1: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment
Data Time Period: 03/1/04 to 2/28/05

	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Objective >= 99.99%*	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	16,536	15,460	16,534	(1,074.35)
Colleton	262	257	261.97	(4.97)

* This standard is based on state law. It is not a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 1 : Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	100	0	0	5	0
Treatment	5	100	0	0	5	0
Total Cases	10	100	0	0	10	0

Explanation of Item 1

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Colleton DSS. State law requires that an investigation of all accepted reports of abuse and neglect be initiated within 24 hours. Even though all 10 of the applicable cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength”, the outcome report indicates that, for the 12-month period under review, Colleton DSS failed to initiate investigations of alleged abuse and neglect within 24-hours in 5 of its 262 (2%) investigations.

Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005
Analysis of Safety Item 2 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure S1.2: Recurrence of Maltreatment – Of all children who were victims of indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect during the reporting period, the percent having another indicated report within a subsequent 6 month period.

Indicated Report Between Sept 1, 2003 and Aug 31, 2004

	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Objective <= 93.90%	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,833	69	8,294.19	469.81
Colleton	130	1	122.07	6.93

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Safety Item 2 : Repeat Maltreatment.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation of Item 2

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. According to CAPSS data 1 of the 130 cases indicated for abuse or neglect during the period under review was a victim in a previously founded report. One of the 20 cases reviewed onsite was a case of repeat maltreatment. Consequently, Colleton DSS met the federally established standard for this item.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Two

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Summary of Findings

-Safety Item 3: Services to prevent removal.

-Safety Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren).

Overall Finding: Partially Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Strength

Analysis of Safety Item 3 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	100	0	0	5	0
Treatment	6	75	2	25	2	0
Total Cases	11	85	2	15	7	0

Item 3

This is an “Area Needing Improvement” for Colleton DSS. This item assesses the appropriateness of the agency’s interventions to prevent the removal of children from their family. Reviewers rated 11 of the applicable 13 cases “strength” for this item. That is because, in 85% of the cases, services to protect children in the home were appropriately applied. However, to receive an overall rating of “Strength”, at least 90% of the cases must be rated “Strength”.

Both cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” were treatment cases. Both cases involved families that had been served by DSS in the past, dealing with the same problems. DSS history with those families suggested that the most recent agency attempts to engage the parent in a treatment process with the same services was not adequate.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Analysis of Safety Item 4 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Safety Item 4: Risk of harm.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	10	100	0	0	0	0
Total Cases	20	100	0	0	0	0

<u>Strategic Outcome Report Findings</u>				
Measure S2.2: Risk of harm to child – Of all unfounded investigations during the reporting period, the percent receiving subsequent reports within six months of the initial report.				
	Number Alleged Child Victims in an Unfounded Rept 08/01/03 to 07/31/04	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 91.50%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	14,225	1,110	13,015.88	99.13
Colleton	235	11	215.03	8.97

* This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation of “Risk of Harm” measure

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. The standard for the outcome report in CAPSS is that no more than 8.5% of alleged child victims have another report within 6 months of the initial report. According to CAPSS, Colleton DSS met the objective for this item. It must be understood that “Subsequent reports of abuse” is a proxy measure for “Risk of harm” because additional, unsubstantiated reports of abuse do not always mean that a child remains at risk.

Onsite reviewers are able to assess what CAPSS cannot. Onsite reviewers determine how effective the county DSS office is at managing the risks of harm that necessitate continued involvement by DSS. Even by this criterion, all 20 applicable cases reviewed were rated Strength.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Three

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 5: Foster care re-entries
- Item 6: Stability of foster care placemt.
- Item 7: Permanency goal for child
- Item 8: Reunification, plmt w/ relatives
- Item 9: Adoption
- Item 10: Perm goal of other planned arrangmt

Partially Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Strength

Findings: Strength

Findings: Area Needing Improvement

Findings: Strength

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 5 Findings

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 5: Foster care re-entries.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	86	1	14	2	0

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.1: **Foster Care Re-entries** – Of all children who entered care during the year under review, the percent that re-entered foster care
Within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.

	Number Children Entering Care 03/01/04 to 02/28/05	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Fos Care Episode	Number of Children Objective >= 91.40% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,275	264	2,993.35	17.65
Colleton	67	10	61.24	(4.24)

* This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Foster Care Re-entries is an “Area Needing Improvement for Colleton DSS.

According to CAPSS, 10 of the 67 children (15%) who entered care in Colleton County during the period under review had been returned home in the prior 12 months. One of the applicable 7 cases reviewed onsite involved a child re-entering foster care.

Most children re-entering foster care were placed with relatives after their previous foster care stay. That relative then proves to be unable and/or unwilling to provide the child with a permanent home. That was the situation with the case rated “Area Needing Improvement”.

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 6 Findings

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 6: Stability of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	60	4	40	0	0

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.2: **Stability of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.

	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective >= 86.70%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,677	3,029	3,187.96	(158.96)
Colleton	85	55	73.70	(18.70)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

Stability of foster care placement is an “Area Needing Improvement”. The outcome report shows that 55 of the 85 children (65%) in care less than 12 months had no more than 2 foster care placements. This falls short of the standard of 86.7%. The prevalence of Colleton DSS children experiencing multiple placement moves is like that of foster children managed by Managed Treatment Services (MTS). This is significant because an inability to be managed within regular foster care is an eligibility criterion for MTS case management. In other words, multiple placement moves can be expected of MTS clients, but should not be expected of County DSS clients.

Onsite reviewers not only counted the number of moves children in foster care experienced, but looked at the reasons for those moves. Four of the ten cases reviewed onsite experienced three or more placement changes during the period under review. They were older children with emotional and behavioral disorders for whom ISCEDC funded placement should have been sought earlier in the case history.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 7 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.5: **Permanency Goal for Child** – Of all children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the percent for which a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition has been filed.

	Children in Care At Least 15 of Last 22 Months 03/04 –02/05	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 53.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,619	1,610	1,918.07	6.92
Colleton	60	27	31.80	(4.80)

* This is DSS established objective. The federal agency, Administration for Children & Families, gathers data on this measure, but has not established a numerical objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 7: Permanency goal for children.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. To meet the criteria established in the CAPSS report 53.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. In Colleton DSS 45% (27/60) of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. If DSS does not pursue TPR for a child in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, there should be compelling reason for not doing so. According to the Foster Care Review Board, “Colleton DSS plans are well presented and well documented.”

Onsite reviewers rated this item based on two criteria: 1) Is the permanency goal appropriately matched to the child’s need? and 2) Is the agency acting to cause the goal to be achieved timely? Each of the ten cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength” for this item.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Analysis of Safety Permanency Item 8 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.3: **Length of Time to Achieve Reunification** – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caregiver, at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.

	Number of Children Where Foster Care Services Closed. Last Plan Was Return Home 03/01/04–02/28/05	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective $\geq 76.20\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,021	1,652	1,540.00	112.00
Colleton	42	34	32.00	2.00

* This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. To meet this federally established criteria at least 76.20% of the children returned to their parents from foster care must be returned within 12 months of their removal from home. In Colleton County 81% of the children returned home within a year of removal. The agency average is that 82% of the children entering foster care return home within one year.

All of the applicable cases reviewed onsite were rated “Strength”.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Analysis of Permanency Item 9 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.4: **Length of Time to Achieve Adoption** – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.

	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption W/in Past 12 Months	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective $\geq 32.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	366	75	117.12	(42.12)
Colleton	5	2	1.60	0.40

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 9: Adoption.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	0	0	3	100	7	0

Explanation

This is a “Area Needing Improvement”. The outcome report shows that shows that Colleton DSS met the $\geq 32.00\%$ criteria because 2 of the 5 adoptions completed were done within 24 months of those children entering care. The problem is that Colleton DSS should have completed more than 5 adoptions in a year. Twenty-nine children had a plan of adoption.

Unlike the outcome report, onsite reviewers did not look at completed adoptions. They evaluated three cases of children with a plan of adoption to determine if a) adoption was the appropriate plan for the child, and b) if the case was on pace to be completed within 24 months of the child entering care. All three cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement”.

Stakeholders stated that the problem is not lack of staff or services. Colleton DSS has a backlog of TPR’s because of court delays. Colleton is now using pre-trial hearings to ensure that all parties will be present and prepared at the time of the court hearings. They have seen some improvement.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Analysis of Permanency Item 10 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P3.6: **Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement”** – Of all children in foster care, the percent with a permanency goal of emancipation (Indep Liv Services) or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family.

	Number of Children In Care at Least One Day 03/01/04 – 02/28/05	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan “Other Planned Living Arrangement”	Number of Children Objective $\geq 85.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,121	1,139	6,902.85	79.15
Colleton	144	20	122.40	1.60

* This is a DSS established objective.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Permanency Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	3	100	0	0	7	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. The standard for this objective is that no more than 15% of the children in foster care should have this plan. Approximately 14% of the children in Colleton DSS custody have this plan. Onsite reviewers evaluated 3 cases of foster children with the plan of Alternate Planned Permanent Living Arrangement (APPLA) to determine if a) that was the appropriate plan for the child, and b) if the child was receiving appropriate independent living services. All three cases were rated “Strength”.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Four

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 11: Proximity of placement
- Item 12: Placement with siblings.
- Item 13: Visiting w/ parents & siblings
- Item 14: Preserving connections
- Item 15: Relative placement
- Item 16: Relationship of child w/ parents

Partially Achieved

Finding: Strength

Finding: Strength

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Findings: Strength

Findings: Area Needing Improvement

Findings: Strength

Analysis of Permanency Item 11 Findings

Strategic Outcome Report Findings

Measure P4.1: **Proximity of Foster Care Placement** – Of all children in foster care during the reporting period (excluding MTS and Adoptions children), the percent placed within their county of origin.

	Number of Children In Care 03/01/04 – 02/28/05	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective >= 70.00%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	6,051	3,966	65.54	4,235.70	(269.70)
Colleton	144	111	77.08	100.80	10.20

* This is a DSS established objective.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement.						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	9	90	1	10	0	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength” for Colleton DSS. To meet this objective 70%, or more, of the children in care must be placed in Colleton County. The outcome report indicates that 77% (111/144) of the children in care are placed in the county. Consequently, the county met the standard for this item.

Onsite reviewers rated this item by different criteria. If a child was placed out-of-county to receive medical or behavioral treatment this item was rated “strength”. Onsite reviewers rated 9 of 10 cases “strength”.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 12: Placement with siblings						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. It was apparent that the agency attempted to place siblings together when resources and circumstances made that possible. When siblings were not placed together, it was not in their best interest to be placed together. Colleton is fortunate to have foster homes willing to care for relatively large sibling groups and teens.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	5	56	4	44	1	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. In two of the cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” for this item visitation with a parent continued after DSS had evidence that the parent’s visits were harmful to the child. The steps needed to stop those visits were not promptly taken. The other two cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved large sibling groups separated into three foster care placements. In those cases, visits occurred between some, but not all siblings.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 14: Preserving connections						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	100	0	0	2	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s ability to preserve a child in foster care’s connection to his/her community, family, and faith. All eight of the applicable cases reviewed were rated “Strength” for this item. Many of the children in foster care in Colleton County are placed in or near their home communities, and attend their same schools. Caseworkers documented the efforts of foster parents to help children maintain their relationships with significant people in their lives.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 15: Relative placement						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	70	3	30	0	0

Explanation

This is an “Area Needing Improvement”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers. In 7 of the 10 cases, both maternal and paternal relatives were assessed as placement options. In the 3 cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” there was no evidence that paternal relatives were assessed.

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Permanency Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0

Explanation

This is a “Strength”. This item addresses the agency’s effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. All applicable cases were rated “Strength”. Colleton DSS is fortunate to have foster parents who are willing to strengthen the relationships between the children in their care and those children’s parents. In most instances it was the foster parents who took the initiative to invite and involve parents in their children’s school and other activities.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Five

Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

- Item 17: Needs & services
- Item 18: Involvement in case planning
- Item 19: Worker visits with child
- Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)

Partially Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Strength

Findings: Area Needing Improvement

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	6	60	4	40	0	0
Total Cases	16	80	4	20	0	0

Explanation

This item asks two questions: 1) Were the needs of the child, parents, and foster parents assessed, and 2) Did the agency take steps to meet the identified needs? This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”** for Colleton DSS.

With 100% of foster care cases rated “Strength” and 60% of treatment cases rated “Strength” it is evident that the area needing improvement for this item is casework practice in treatment cases. When children were placed with a relative, the agency assessed and provided services to the parent, but did not consistently assess or provide services to the relative, who had become the primary caregiver. This was the case even when it appeared that the relative would become the child's permanent caregiver.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	100	0	0	4	0
Treatment	5	56	4	44	1	0
Total Cases	11	73	4	27	5	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. The normal practice among foster care cases is to involve parents and age-appropriate children in the case planning process. However, in treatment cases the caseworkers are more likely to develop the plan in the office then present the plan to the parents to sign.

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 19: Worker visits with child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	9	90	1	10	0	0
Total Cases	19	95	1	5	0	0

Explanation

This is a “**Strength**”. This rating is based on two questions: 1) are Colleton DSS staff visiting children according to policy, and 2) do the visits focus on issues related to the treatment plan? The answer to both questions is “Yes” for both treatment and foster care cases. In most of the cases reviewed, saw their clients more than the minimum once-a-month visit required by policy. Face-to-face visits were based on the needs presented in each case.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	7	100	0	0	3	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	14	82	3	18	3	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**” for Colleton DSS. All applicable foster care cases were rated “Strength”. The majority of the CPS treatment cases were rated “Strength” (70%). The treatment cases caused the overall rating for this item to fall below the 90% threshold. Three of the 10 CPS treatment cases were rated “Area Needing Improvement”. In one instance the worker’s visits were with the alternate caregiver (a relative), but not with the mother with whom DSS had a treatment plan. In another instance a delay of nearly two months occurred when the case was transferred from the assessment worker to the treatment worker.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Six

Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

Substantially Achieved

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 21: Educational needs of child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	8	100	0	0	2	0
Treatment	6	86	1	14	3	0
Total Cases	14	93	1	7	5	0

Explanation

This is a “**Strength**” for Colleton DSS. This item asks two questions: 1) Did DSS assess the educational needs of the children under their supervision, and 2) Were identified educational needs addressed? The answer to both questions was “Yes” in 93% of the cases reviewed. Workers did not rely on statements from parents to assess the children’s school performance. They communicated directly with the schools. School records were in the case files.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Seven

Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Summary of Findings

Overall Finding:

-Item 22: Physical health of the child
-Item 23: Mental health of the child

Not Achieved

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Finding: Area Needing Improvement

Site Visit Findings Performance Item Ratings

Well Being Item 22: Physical health of the child

	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	10	100	0	0	0	0
Treatment	7	70	3	30	0	0
Total Cases	17	85	3	15	0	0

Explanation

This is an **“Area Needing Improvement”**. The physical health needs of children in foster care were consistently assessed and identified medical needs were met. The same was true for the majority (70%) of the treatment cases. Two of the 3 treatment cases rated “Area Needing Improvement” involved sexually abused children for whom the agency’s sexual abuse protocol was not followed. Consequently, the documentation of medical assessment was not in the case record.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

<u>Site Visit Findings</u> Performance Item Ratings						
Well Being Item 23: Mental health of the child						
	Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Foster Care	6	86	1	14	3	0
Treatment	6	67	3	33	1	0
Total Cases	12	75	4	25	4	0

Explanation

This is an “**Area Needing Improvement**”. Documentation in the case records indicated that children in foster care were assessed for Mental Health services and generally received counseling as needed. Children in treatment cases were less likely to have their mental health needs met. The factors causing the 3 CPS treatment cases to be rated “Area Needing Improvement” were case specific and formed no trend. In one instance the child did not receive needed mental health services because mother refused to believe that the child had been sexually abused. That mother’s protective capacity needed to be reassessed. In another case, the agency’s prior involvement provided information that indicated the possibility of untreated trauma that should have been assessed.

Section Eight – Foster Home Licenses

This is an **Area Needing Improvement**. Eleven of the 50 foster home records were reviewed.

1. All records reviewed indicate that the foster homes are good placement resources for children.
2. Quarterly visits are being done, but documentation does not address the specific areas that should be monitored. The caseworker is not addressing mandated questions such as: childcare arrangements, interactions between foster child and foster family, etc. Documentation in every record is identical – no individualization. The Quarterly Home Visit Guide should be used.
3. The licensing worker is not seeing both foster parents. She is meeting only with the foster mothers.
4. Training hours are documented.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Section Nine – Unfounded Investigations

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Investigation initiated timely?	3	2
Was assessment adequate?	4	1
Was decision appropriate?	5	0

Analysis: Colleton DSS accepts 97.5% of all intakes for investigation. This workload created some compliance problems. The outcome report shows that 7 of the 268 investigations took longer than 24 hours to initiate. However, 2 of the 5 unfounded cases reviewed were not investigated within 2 hours as required for cases rated “High Risk”. The outcome report does not capture investigations of High and Medium risk cases that fail to comply with policy. The workload also appears to delay case decision.

Section Ten – Screened Out Intakes

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>N/A</u>
Appropriately Screened Out?	8	2	
Necessary Collaterals Contacted?			10
Appropriate Referrals Made?		4	6

Analysis: This is an **Area Needing Improvement** for Colleton DSS. It should first be noted that 8 of the 10 intakes reviewed were appropriately screened out. Five of the 10 intakes reviewed did not contain enough information to support the decision to screen out the intake. Four of the intakes should have been referred either to law enforcement or to the Out-of-Home Abuse & Neglect unit (OHAN) in DSS state office. There was no evidence that those referrals occurred. The failure to adequately document the reason for screened-out decisions undermines part of the intent of Stephanie’s Law (sec 20-7-650) which mandates that screened out intakes be retained in the agency’s information system for at least 5 years. The intakes are retained so that they can factor into the decision-making should additional reports on the same case be made in the future.

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**

Case Rating Summary							
The performance and outcome ratings below show the number of cases receiving that rating, followed by the percent of the total that number represents. Not Applicable (N/A) cases do not factor in the percentage.							
Performance Item or Outcome	Perf. Item Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improve - ment	N/A*	Substan- tially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieve d	N/A*
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.				19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0	0
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment	10 (100%)	0	10				
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.				18 (90%)	2 (10%)	0	0
Item 3: Services to family to protect child (ren) in home and prevent removal	11 (85%)	2 (15%)	7				
Item 4: Risk of harm to child (ren)	20 (100%)	0	0				
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0	0
Item 5: Foster care re-entries	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	3				
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	0				
Item 7: Permanency goal for child	10 (100%)	0	0				
Item 8: Reunification, guardianship, or permanent placement with relatives	6 (100%)	0	4				
Item 9: Adoption	0	3 (100%)	7				
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement	3 (100%)	0	7				
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0	0
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	0				
Item 12: Placement with siblings	6 (100%)	0	4				
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	5 (56%)	4 (44%)	1				
Item 14: Preserving connections	8 (100%)	0	2				
Item 15: Relative placement	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0				
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents	7 (100%)	0	3				
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				16 (80%)	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	0
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents	16 (80%)	4 (20%)	0				
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning	11 (65%)	6 (35%)	3				
Item 19: Worker visits with child	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0				
Item 20: Worker visits with parent(s)	14 (82%)	3 (18%)	3				
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				14 (93%)	0	1 (7%)	5
Item 21: Educational needs of the child	14 (93%)	1 (7%)	5				
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				14 (75%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	0
Item 22: Physical health of the child	17 (85%)	3 (15%)	0				
Item 23: Mental health of the child	12 (75%)	4 (25%)	4				

**Colleton County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
March 2005**